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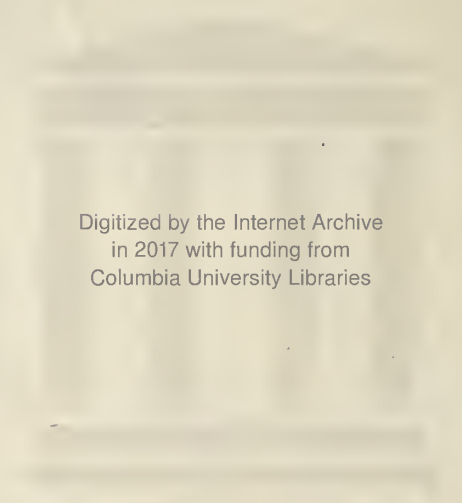

Awakening of China



BY

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The Awakening of China.*

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

RECENTLY on two different Sundays I have listened to sermons, one by Mr. Howard Richards, Jr., an Episcopal missionary, of Boone College in Wuchang, China, and one by the Rev. Dr. John Fox, a Presbyterian clergyman, who, in behalf of the Bible Society, has just made a tour of the world, devoting his time especially to China. Dr. Fox urged in the strongest way the need of our giving substantial backing to the Bible Society—and it is not very creditable to us as a people that the British Bible Society should have three times the funds of the American Bible Society. But what concerned me most at the moment was the very strong appeal made by both speakers for aid in awakening and directing the interest of the American people in the cause of Christian education in China. The appeal was made by both men in the broadest possible spirit, not especially on behalf of any institution, any church or denomination, but in advocacy of the fulfillment of our human, philanthropic, Christian obligations to this great awakening people across the sea. Mr. Richards described his experience during the famine, when on the famine relief committee at Hsuchou, six days' journey from Shang-

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hai. Not only he and other Episcopalians, but Presbyterians and Roman Catholics, all served together on the committee in charge of the handling and distribution of the large amount of food-stuffs and money given to the starving people. He dwelt on the way he was impressed while thus serving on the committee, by seeing Chinese students from schools carried on by each of these three churches represented on the committee. He spoke of the great amount of educational work being carried on in China, not only by the Protestant denominations, but by the different Roman Catholic orders, many of which are backed by men and money from Roman Catholics of the United States; and he mentioned particularly the successful school for Chinese boys at Wuchang carried on by Father Espelage, and his own special friendship for one of the men who at Hsuchou was carrying on a Roman Catholic school for farmers' boys, who were supported at the remarkably low cost of less than six cents a day. The appeals of both Mr. Richards and Dr. Fox were made in the largest sense for Christian and humanitarian work. Dr. Fox mentioned several very striking facts to show the awakening of interest in Occidental thought and work among the people of China; how one prominent Viceroy, a very able and high-minded man, though not a professed Christian, has translated into Chinese not only certain scientific works such as the writings of Huxley, but also many chapters from the four Gospels; and how a search in the book-stalls of one Chinese city showed no less than ninety books recently published dealing with

phases of Occidental thought, or giving advice by Chinese writers to their own countrymen based on Occidental experiences of all kinds, from kindergartens to Christianity.

China is awakening. There is increasing contact with foreigners, increasing foreign trade, and a growing adoption of modern methods of communication and transportation, while some progress is being made in the introduction of labor-saving devices, with consequent industrial evolution. In over a hundred cities there is now a more or less successful effort to introduce a Western police system, and what this means for the preservation of order it is hardly necessary to point out. Much admirable evangelistic, educational, and medical missionary work is being done by the missionaries; and a part of this consists in the introduction and broadcast circulation of translations of the Bible and of Western literature. The attitude of the Chinese towards learning from the West has been utterly changed ever since August, 1901, when, by an Imperial edict, the old-style literary examinations were abolished, and it was directed that future candidates, for degrees as well as for office, should write their essays on such modern topics as Western science, government, and laws. In August last over a hundred Chinese students who are studying in this country met in conference at Ashburnham, Massachusetts. Such a movement as this means a shaking loose from the old superstitions which have fettered the Chinese to a degree it is hard for us to realize; and it also means the growth of a real and intelligent spirit of patriotism in all parts of China.

Americans are doing much for securing Christian education among the Chinese. They are training many of the future leaders and thousands of the rank and file. In 1907 there were nearly thirty thousand Chinese students among the eleven hundred and fifty-three American educational institutions in China, which embraced kindergartens, primary schools, high schools, colleges, universities, normal, divinity, and trade schools. Many men who have received their early training at some one of the American schools or colleges in China are now mightily influencing the industrial, political, and moral life of their land. One of the most important functions of these schools has been to supply good native teachers for China, and their graduates are in constantly increasing demand. But recently, in making such a demand, the Chinese Director-General of Education at Nanking, who is not himself a Christian, stated in explanation that the old moral maxims of Chinese education, though they expressed abstract truths, had no spiritual motives behind them, and that the old and formalized religion had been divorced from morality, and concluded with these striking words: "The only religion that teaches both the spiritual wants of mankind and the principles of morality also is the Christian religion. That is why we wish you to teach it in our leading schools." The American schools stimulate and aid the best Chinese in an earnest fight against opium and kindred vices, and against political corruption, and encourage them bravely to strive for a high standard of domestic morality.

Surely when so much is being done by brave,

sincere, disinterested countrymen of ours over in China, we at home should help them with men and with money. I believe that such help would benefit us commercially, but I do not advocate it chiefly for this reason; indeed, I think the chief good to the United States would be the good always derived by a nation, as by an individual, when noble and unselfish work is done. The work of the missionaries tends to avert revolutionary disturbances in China, and to lead her into a position of power for peace and righteousness. She cannot herself at present carry on an effective educational work; in addition to the lack of teachers, the Chinese debt is too great—and incidentally Americans must feel a genuine sense of pleasure in this Nation's having returned the major part of the indemnity fund to China. The Christian educational schools in China must for the present take the leading part in the work for the uplifting of the whole Chinese character, for that depends primarily, as the character of every nation must depend, on the lives of the individual men and women.

The awakening of China is one of the great events of our age, and the remedy for the "yellow peril," whatever that may be, is not the repression of life, but the cultivation and direction of life. Here at home we believe that the remedy for popular discontent is not repression but justice and education. Similarly, the best way to avert possible peril, commercial or military, from the great Chinese people, is by behaving righteously toward them and by striving to inspire a righteous life among them. Our Christian missions have for

their object not only the saving of souls, but the imparting of a life that makes possible the kingdom of God on the earth. It seems to me that there is no place where there is better opportunity to-day to do this work than in China, and I earnestly hope that we can attract the attention of the great public outside of the so-called missionary circles to the possibility and practicability, no less than to the importance, of the work. As Bishop Brent has said, *now* is the time for the West to implant its ideals in the Orient, in such fashion as to minimize the chance of a dreadful future clash between two radically different and hostile civilizations; if we wait until to-morrow, we may find that we have waited too long.

